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Media Promotes 'Reformers' In Wake of Abramoff Scandal

By Michael Collins Piper

In the wake of the growing scandal surrounding the sleazy activities of disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff, a longtime Republican Party activist and promoter of Israel's interests, the major media has been touting two unlikely Republican advocates for "reform": former GOP House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)

However, a careful review of the records of both Gingrich and McCain indicates that they can hardly be counted upon to bring genuine reform to curtail the domination of Congress by special interest lobbies.

Take the case of the former House speaker. While serving in Congress and talking about cost-cutting, he once declared that U.S. foreign aid to Israel was one of the areas that no cost-cutting was possible and that, quite the contrary, required additional funding from tax-burdened Americans.

IT GOES BOTH WAYS: Democrats from the House and Senate listen to Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) during a press conference unveiling the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress January 18, 2006, in Washington. Democrats proposed the legislation in reaction to the corruption and scandals involving some GOP lawmakers and lobbyists. Democrat or Republican, the truth is congressmen (and women) routinely do "favors" for lavish gifts.

In addition, while Gingrich was busy on Capitol Hill carrying water for Israeli interests, his then-wife Marianne was on the payroll of the Israel Export Development Company (IDECO), which was promoting the financial interests of Israel vis-à-vis lucrative trade agreements with the U.S.

Mrs. Gingrich's lucrative deal with IDECO was cut in August 1994 after she and her husband traveled to Israel at the expense of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). AIPAC is the foreign lobby for Israel that, even as this is written, has been embarrassed by the criminal indictment of two of its top lobbyists on charges of suspected espionage on behalf of Israel.

At the time it was first revealed that Mrs. Gingrich was taking home a monthly stipend of $2,500 plus "commissions" from the Israeli corporate operation. However, Mrs. Gingrich has refused to disclose the size of those "commissions."

Mrs. Gingrich has responded to criticisms of her sweet deal by saying "If I were going to get a political payoff, it would not be for the amount of money I am making." However, the fact is, the yearly figure of $30,000 is precisely the kind of figures often seen linked to political payoffs. And what is interesting is that IEDCO president Larry Silverstein admitted to ***The Wall Street Journal*** that Gingrich was one of a number of members of Congress who were lobbied to support his company's proposal.

Mrs. Gingrich's Israeli connection was obviously an egregious conflict of interest for Gingrich, but the congressman's friends in high places saw no problem — since "our ally Israel" was involved. Imagine the ruckus if Mrs. Gingrich had been working for Arab interests.

As for so-called "reformer" John McCain, his track record is not so much more attractive. Following the 2002 elections, when campaign finance reform legislation — shepherded into law by McCain and Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) — went into effect, the New York-based weekly newspaper ***Forward***, the most influential voice of the pro-Israel lobby in America, bragged in its first post-election edition that "Jewish interest groups may be the big winners" under the vaunted McCain-Feingold campaign finance measures. ***Forward*** asserted flatly:

> Political hands say groups such as the Republican Jewish Coalition and its counterpart, the National Jewish Democratic Council, not-for-profits unaffected by the ban on "soft money" for political campaigns, are poised to be big beneficiaries of the new [campaign finance legislation] regime.

In fact, under the McCain-Feingold "reform" measure, the new strength in organized Jewish political power would come at the expense of corporations, labor unions and other interest groups — and wealthy individuals, too — who were previously exempt from regular limits on campaign contributions if their funds were donated directly to national party organizations for "party building," voter drives and issues advertisements.

Under the new law only so-called "issues" groups such as the aforementioned Jewish organizations would not be subject to limits. ***Forward*** pointed out:

> As long as the groups are independent of the parties and candidates do not "coordinate" their activities with them, their contributions remain unrestricted.

What this means is that a wide-ranging number of political action committees focused on Israel interests can now spend unlimited amounts of money working to elect or defeat candidates.

Although top Jewish organizations such as the Anti- Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith and AIPAC target offending politicians for destruction, these organizations do not formally involve themselves in election campaigns or donate money to political figures.

However, it is an "open secret" that dozens of other Jewish political organizations rely on "a wink and a nod" from the ADL and AIPAC to determine whom they should support or oppose financially.

Anyone familiar with the history and record of McCain would not be surprised that McCain should be the one responsible for enacting such unfair and biased legislation designed to benefit the political power of the pro-Israel lobby. In fact, McCain owes his entire career to the indirect sponsorship of the powerful organized-crime-enriched family of billionaire Edgar Bronfman, head of the World Jewish Congress. McCain's chief backer in Arizona politics, Kemper Marley, was a front man for the Bronfman family, and McCain's own family beer distribution fortune came through this connection.

In addition, much of McCain's own campaign money has come from a clique of groups and individuals all of whom have close ties to the Israeli lobby, including: organized crime-linked gambling interests in Las Vegas, international bankers such as Goldman Sachs and Hollywood figures such as the late mob-linked Lew Wasserman.

It will also be remembered that McCain's father, the late Adm. John McCain, was a key player in the official U.S. government cover-up of Israel's murder of 34 American sailors aboard the USS Liberty on June 8, 1967.

A journalist specializing in media critique, Michael Collins Piper is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem***, ***The Judas Goats***, and ***Dirty Secrets***, all available from America First Books and First Amendment Books. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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